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THE NATURE OF THE SOCIAL UNITY

AN EXAMINATION OF THE THEORY THAT SOCIETY IS A PSYCHIC UNITY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTIES OF ARTS AND LITERATURE, IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY)

BY
ROMANZO ADAMS

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THE fact that social processes are characterized by some sort of unity is generally recognized, but sociologists are not yet agreed as to the nature of this unity. Some of the earlier sociologists, including Comte, described society somewhat as a mechanical unity. Of course, this does not signify that they really failed to distinguish between the unity of a machine and the unity of society. They did practically make a distinction, but, not having thought it out clearly, they were not able to state it. In the absence of any well-defined notion of the peculiar nature of the social unity, they merely took the simplest notion of unity, the one which they had most clearly defined to themselves, generalized it, and then applied it to society. Now, in a practical sense this was not wholly wrong. It did serve to call attention to certain social relationships; and while the form of the statement was doubtless felt to be figurative or analogical, the relationships to which it called attention were real. Still the procedure was logically wrong, and the best thing to be said for it is that for a time it helped to stimulate the thinking that eventually created a demand for a more adequate statement.

The next and more adequate statement made much use of the biological analogy. Of some writers of this school it would be unfair to say that they did not distinguish between the social and the biological unity, but there is so much of biological terminology in their statements that they have helped to foster the habit of thinking of society after the biological analogy. Even Spencer, whose conception of the social unity is not fundamentally based upon the biological analogy, is to be criticised in that he does not make any adequate statement of a real basis at all. His superstructure implies a basis which is not merely analogical, but, in the absence of a clear statement of this, the reader is apt to mis-

take his profusion of biological illustration for a basis. Other writers of less note were more deeply influenced by the analogy. Fundamentally, the fallacy of the writers of this school, in so far as they did not escape from the *form* of their statement, is the same fallacy as that made by those who were influenced by the mechanical analogy. Instead of actually analyzing the social process and discovering the real unity, they merely generalized their conception of the biological unity. This was favored by two considerations. First, the recent scientific progress in biology and the practical problems connected therewith had brought it to the center of the stage. Everybody was interested in biology; its conceptions and its terminology were influencing the whole form of the world's thinking. Secondly, the biological unity bears a deeper resemblance to the social unity than does the mechanical, and thus it was more adequate as an analogy. Just as it is to be criticised on the same logical ground as the mechanical statement, so it has the same practical justification. Stated more generally, the fundamental fallacy of each lies in the fact that it takes a concept which is valid in a certain sphere and applies it in a sphere in which it is not valid, just because there are certain resemblances between the two spheres. The two spheres are not altogether similar. It is just because these points of difference were not analyzed and considered equally with the points of resemblance that the unity was not adequately conceived.

Following the biological analogy came the psychological analogy. This can, in a general way, be accounted for in much the same manner. Psychology had made progress. Its conceptions and terminology were exerting a greater influence upon thinking generally. In a certain respect the psychological analogy was more nearly adequate as a statement of the social unity than was the biological analogy. In its extenuation much may be said similar to what has already been said in regard to the other two forms of analogy. It has helped to call attention to certain aspects of reality. It may also be granted that the psychological statement is felt to be, in some sense, figurative, although some of the writers of this school positively assert that they are to be taken literally and not figuratively. To be per-

fectly fair to such writers, we must conclude, not that they have really conceived of society as a psychic unity, but rather that, in the absence of any adequate conception of the social unity based upon analysis, in the midst of a confusion of thought, they assert that the social is a psychic unity, not clearly seeing the implications of such a statement.

So far I have simply taken for granted the truth of the assertion that the mechanical, the biological, and the psychological statements of the social unity are merely analogies, crediting the writers in each case with a more or less vague feeling that they were analogies, and yet accusing them of a failure to state the unity in non-analogical terms, even when their superstructure has implied such a possible statement. At this time it is unnecessary to offer any argument to show that the assumption of their being mere analogies is true in the case of the first two; but there is a considerable number of writers of repute who still maintain that the psychological analogy is not an analogy, that "the sociological organism is in the final analysis a psychic organism."[1]

While I have, for the sake of fairness, distinguished between the form of statement and the actual belief held by these writers, crediting them in most instances with better thinking than the form of statement would allow, I do not mean to hold the form of statement as a matter of small importance. Taking the most favorable view of an author's theory, it is still true that a false statement is the result of false, or confused, thinking. It is the purpose of this paper to criticise the psychological statement, showing that the social unity is not a psychic unity. An attempt will also be made to set forth the true nature of the social unity.

A discussion of the question of the nature of the social unity must be preceded by some consideration of the question of unity itself.[2] This cannot be done in any adequate way in this place, neither is it possible to avoid some statement of the position so

[1] VINCENT, *The Social Mind and Education*, p. 92.

[2] While not following him precisely, and while in some respects reaching a conclusion differing from his, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to J. S. Mackenzie for the general form of this analysis. See MACKENZIE, *Introduction to Social Philosophy*, chap. iii.

fundamental to the whole question. Unity is not a matter of existence, but of method; it is merely a limiting conception. If it should be maintained that unity is something inherent in the thing itself, independent of experience, then it would be necessary to say that the concept has no value; for we are not concerned with anything outside of the world of experience. A unity is just experience organized under a unifying concept, its nature depending on the purpose of the unifying consciousness. There are various grades or stages of unity. Anything may be thought of as a unity or a whole, if it suits any immediate purpose. On the other hand, anything but the universe may be thought of as a part of a larger whole, when it suits some purpose. Thus, a brick has unity from a certain standpoint — it is a whole brick; but it may be regarded as a part of a building. A picture has a certain unity in that it represents a single purpose and produces a single effect; but it cannot do this alone, for both purpose and effect lie outside of the picture, and consequently the picture is but a part of a larger whole which includes conscious individuals. The only absolute unity is the unity of the universe; all others are relative. In order to get intellectual and practical control of any situation, we are justified in considering anything as a whole. The only question concerning any conception of unity is: Does it subserve this scientific and practical end?

Since, then, there are various grades or stages of unity, depending upon the purpose of the unifying consciousness, it will be helpful to distinguish between the more significant stages and to place society with reference to this gradation. First, a distinction should be made between a unity and a unit. A unit is a part which may be conveniently used for the measurement or description of a whole made up of similar units. A unit is a unit with reference to the whole of which it is a part. A unity is a whole considered as made up of parts which derive their significance from their relation to the whole. Thus, in a flock of birds, a bird may be considered a unit with reference to the flock, which is the unity. Or, if the individual bird be the whole under considera-

tion, the cell may be taken as the unit. In any case, we speak of the constituent units or parts, and the constituted unity or whole.

The idea of end is in some way involved in every sort of unity. It might, at first, seem that in the unity of a pebble there is no idea of end. But why does the pebble come into consciousness at all? Why does one distinguish it from the rest of the situation and give it an identity of its own? Evidently this is done only with reference to using it as a means toward some end. Of course, one may see and distinguish a pebble without at the time having any definite end in view, but, in general, the concept through which it is apperceived is developed through situations in which an end is present in consciousness. There would be no need for the concept "pebble" nor for the perception of a particular pebble, were it not for some end. It is perfectly clear, however, that the end in this case lies outside of the unity itself, and consequently that, when we take a deeper view of it, it loses its wholeness, becoming a mere part, a means to some conscious end.

It is only as we ignore ourselves and our purposes as a part of the situation that the pebble can be thought of as a whole. We are able to ignore the purpose just because, for the time being, it is assumed as fixed. Attention is concentrated upon the instrument or means, because that is to be selected. If, however, we are to get any real meaning for the unity as means, we must relate it to the purpose, thus making it an element in a situation, and not a whole in and of itself.

Likewise the unity of a machine lies in the end for which it is designed; and the end is outside of itself and in some conscious individual. The machine differs from the pebble in that, on the side of origin, there is a larger element of conscious purpose. It not merely subserves some end, but it was made for the purpose of subserving an end. To the degree, therefore, that a machine represents more of purpose in its origin, more of conscious adaptation and specialization in its utility, it represents a higher grade of unity than the pebble.

A plant has a higher grade of unity than a pebble or a machine. It is like them, however, in that its end lies outside of

itself — assuming that plants are not conscious. It has no real end — end in consciousness — until it is brought within the circuit of some individual's consciousness. Adopting Mackenzie's[3] criterion of the organic — the having of an end involved in its own nature — it is necessary to deny to the plant the name of organism. The plant in and of itself is not strictly organic. It may be considered as organic in that it is an organic part of a larger whole which includes some conscious individual. In this respect, however, it does not differ from the pebble or the machine. They, too, may be brought into the circuit of a whole of consciousness.

By what right, then, may the plant be regarded as organic in some sense in which the pebble and the machine are not organic? This can be answered better after noticing a certain characteristic of the unity of consciousness. In our own inner experience we are conscious, not only of means and ends, but of a certain circuitous process in which the ends become means and the means ends. Each part of the conscious process serves as a means to keep up all the other partial processes, and, in turn, is an end for which all other partial processes are means. We are not able to discover any final end outside of this interaction. The *summum bonum* is a situation in which each partial process contributes adequately to the going on of all the other parts. Now, it is not merely the fact that each partial process does act as both means and end, the

[3] "A mechanical system is a collection of parts externally related; it changes by the alteration of its parts; and it has reference to an end which is outside of itself. A chemical system is a compound of parts which are absorbed in the whole; it does not change except by dissolution; and it has no end to which it refers. In an organism, on the other hand, the relations of the parts are intrinsic; changes take place by an internal adaptation; and its end forms an essential element in its own nature. We are thus led, by contrasting an organism with a mechanical and with a chemical unity, to see some of the most essential points in the conception of organism itself. We see, in short, that an organism is a real whole, in a sense in which no other kind of unity is so. It is *in seipso totus, teres, atque rotundus.* All its parts belong to it: they cannot be altered, so to speak, without its own consent; and the end which it seeks is also its own. It is a little universe in itself. At the same time, it *is* a universe, and not a unit; it has parts, and it does grow, and it has an end. We may define it, therefore, as a whole whose parts are intrinsically related to it, which develops from within, and has reference to an end that is involved in its own nature."— *Introduction to Social Philosophy,* 2d ed., p. 164.

process ever returning upon itself, but the fact that the individual is conscious of this interrelated process constantly repeating itself — of the whole process as maintained by its parts and the parts as deriving their meaning from the whole — that is significant at this point. In other words, the ends are ends for a conscious being; they are subjective.

But certain aspects of experience are objectified by the experiencing individual. There are the physiological processes — respiration, digestion, circulation, etc. These are thought of as being bodily processes, and the ends which they subserve as bodily ends. Respiration is to purify the blood; digestion is to furnish suitable material for the building up of the tissues; circulation is to carry needed materials to the tissues and to remove wastes. The process and the function are both stated objectively. Of course, such terms as "function," "purpose," "end," and "means" can have no real meaning outside of the experience of the subjective, or reflective, individual. When a function or end is stated objectively, the reflective individual is just taken for granted without being brought directly into consideration. When the physiologist says that the end of respiration is the purification of the blood, he means that it does practically have the effect of changing the character of the blood in a certain way. The underlying assumption is that this change is in some way evaluated in consciousness. It is just this assumption that makes it possible to conceive of the human body as really organic. That is, in order to conceive of it as really organic, it is necessary to make it, not a whole, but an abstracted part, the whole being the unity of experience. From a purely objective standpoint, however, it is possible merely to assume and ignore the conscious side, imputing organic wholeness to the body itself; but when this is done, the term "organic" undergoes a corresponding change of meaning.

Now, plants resemble the human bodily organism in certain important respects. In both there is a certain circuitous, self-reinstating process. Each partial process conditions each of the others and is conditioned by them. The process returns upon itself through a series of changes. In the one there are the partial processes of generation, birth, nutrition, growth, etc., mutually

dependent and constantly repeated; in the other there are seeding, germination, nutrition, growth, etc., likewise mutually dependent and constantly repeated. Having completely objectified the term "organic," ignoring its implications of consciousness, there is no reason why it should not be applied to plants. When thus used, this circuitousness of the process as a whole — this interdependence of the partial processes — constitutes the entire connotation of the term. Whether the botanist speaks of the function of some part of a plant — the tendril is to enable the vine to climb — or the use of some means to an end by the plant — the vine uses the trellis to lift itself upon — or of some effort put forth by the plant — the plant reaches out with its tendrils to grasp the trellis — it is all on the same objective level. Although the terms of conscious experience are used, no consciousness is implied.

Stated summarily, the concept of unity involves purpose, or end in consciousness. The various grades or stages of unity are marked by the way the concept of end is involved. If the end lies outside of the thing itself, if it is a mere means, it is not an organic unity. If the end is involved in the nature of the thing, it is an organic unity. The grade of inorganic unity depends upon the degree to which it represents specialized purpose. The hammer represents a higher grade of unity than does the pebble, the engine a higher grade than the hammer. There is no real organic unity except the unity of experience; only a reflective individual can have an end in consciousness. The concepts of purpose, function, means, and ends are objectified and carried over and applied to certain non-conscious unities, thus making them *objectively organic or quasi-organic.* Such are the unities of biological science, so far as consciousness is ignored. The objectively organic unity of the plant resembles the organic unity of experience in that it is a circuitous, self-reinstating process with interdependent parts.[4]

What are the characteristic facts of the social unity? What sort of whole is society? How does the unity of society resemble other forms of unity, and how does it differ from them?

[4] This is not an attempt to give a systematic statement of the various grades of unity. Only so much of this is done as was valuable for the particular purpose of this paper.

The social process is circuitous and self-reinstating. Each part of the process conditions and is conditioned by every other part. The process returns upon itself, and so goes on continuously. In this respect the social unity differs from the unity of the pebble and the machine, and is similar to that of the plant and to that of reflective consciousness. The pebble passes through a series of changes — is worn by wind and wave and driving sand — but it returns not to the form of a pebble again; its series of changes give birth to no new pebble to pass through a similar series of changes. Similarly with the machine. Through wear and rust and breakage the machine ceases to be a machine, and these changes call no similar machine into being. In the case of the plant there is a round of changes. The seed germinates, the plant grows, passes through a series of changes, produces seed; and the whole process is repeated continuously. Each series of changes returns to the point of beginning — makes a complete circle. Each part of the process is both cause and effect to every other part. So it is in society. There are the various processes which have to do with sustentation, the processes which have to do with control, and the processes that serve to perpetuate the traditions, customs, laws, etc., from generation to generation. Each of these partial processes conditions the others and is conditioned by them. The moral and governmental control which a society exercises over its members is essential to the going on of the industrial processes. Likewise the industrial processes condition the processes of moral and governmental control. Both of these would fail were it not that the traditions, customs, knowledge, laws, beliefs, etc., of the people of one generation were perpetuated in the next; and the perpetuation of these depends upon the processes of sustentation and control. The social series repeats itself in its essential characteristics. Particular social groupings come and go, but each resembles its predecessors in type. Society, then, in virtue of this interdependence of parts, this circuitousness of process, is organic. It remains yet to say in what sense it is organic. Is it subjectively organic? Or is it objectively organic?

Society has no end for itself, no end in consciousness. Society

does not have conscious experience. There is no social over-soul. There is no single psychic process corresponding to the whole of the social process. Consequently, society is not a subjectively organic whole. It is not a psychic whole. Social ends are objective. To be real, or subjective, they must be reflected in the conscious experience of some person. The words "function," "purpose," "end," and "means" when applied to the social unity are used in a purely objective sense. Otherwise there is a social over-soul.

Society, then, is an *objectively* organic unity in that the purposes and ends of society are not consciously experienced by society as a whole, but are reflected in the experience of the psychic individual. So far the social unity is similar to that of the plant. To this extent the biological analogy is better than the psychological analogy. Still the social unity differs from that of the plant. How does it differ?

If by analysis we break up the biological process into parts, and then still further break these up, and so continue to the smallest partial process known, we shall get, first, partial processes describable in biological terms; then, smaller and smaller processes similarly describable; and, finally, processes that can be described only in physical and chemical terms. Thus in the plant there are germination, nutrition, growth, and fruiting — processes described in terms of plant function. Taking any one process, say nutrition, it can be subdivided into absorption, elaboration, circulation, assimilation, etc.— processes described in terms of plant function. Then take one of these, say elaboration, and it can be described finally only in physical or chemical terms — the food material undergoes certain chemical changes, and its physical properties are likewise altered. *If we look for the real end or purpose, we cannot find it in the plant as a whole nor in any part.* It is outside and belongs to a person.

Now, if we similarly analyze the social process into its greater and smaller parts, the series will be in some respects different. Breaking up the social process into its parts, there are, first, partial social processes of various grades — that is, processes describable in terms of social function. Continuing, we

come to processes that can be described only in terms of individual activity. Thus we have the various industrial processes as partial social processes. Take one, say the food-producing process of a given society. This may be subdivided into its parts — agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce. Take one of these, say manufacturing, and that may be subdivided into various stages and processes. Continuing this subdivision, we eventually reach a process which is performed by an individual man — shoveling coal, for instance. The partial processes involved in this individual activity are describable only in biological or psychological terms. On the one hand, there is a certain physical organism operating through its parts in such a way as to accomplish a certain objective result — moving the coal. On the other hand, there is a certain process of consciousness. The individual feels in certain ways, he knows certain things, he has certain purposes and employs certain means to their attainment.

This analysis could be continued further, on both the objective and the subjective sides, but it is unnecessary for the present purpose. The important thing to be noticed is that at a certain stage of the analysis we reach the conscious individual, and that the real end of the whole process lies in such individuals. *It is only as social ends are transmuted into conscious valuations that there is any real end.* In the case of the plant, in order to find a real end it was necessary to look to a larger whole embracing some conscious individual. In the case of society, in order to find a real end it is necessary to look to a smaller whole, a part of society — a conscious individual. In this respect the objectively organic unity of society differs from that of the biological unity.

So far the nature of the psychic unity has been taken for granted, and now it will need but brief statement in order to distinguish between it and the social unity. Psychology treats of consciousness *as such.* The psychic unity is the subjective individual. The individual is conscious of himself as a self. All the mental processes belong to him. To all of his experience he gives a self-reference. The individual perceives, remembers, imagines, reasons, feels, etc., and knows that he does these things. They are partial processes deriving their meaning from their

relation to the mental process as a whole. The essential characteristic of the psychic unity is that it does have this self-reference, that its processes belong to a conscious individual and derive their meaning from their relation to the mental unity of individual experience.

The writers of what is here designated as the psychological school of sociologists find the unity of society in some psychological process. I do not include in this group psychologists who take into consideration the fact that individual consciousness is socially conditioned, or sociologists who seek to explain social phenomena by a more adequate analysis of individual psychic processes, but only those writers who expressly or by implication hold that the social unity is a psychic unity. Among such writers may be mentioned Le Bon, Giddings, Vincent, and Elwood. While these writers hold in many respects widely differing views, they are here placed together because they agree in finding the unity of society on the psychic side.

The theory that society is a psychic unity seems to arise out of a confusion of various possible meanings of the term "social consciousness," and so before presenting it for criticism it will be best to analyze this term. In this analysis I follow Dr. Dewey.[5]

By "social consciousness" may be meant a single conscious process corresponding on the subjective side to the whole objective social process. This conception would imply a social *ego,* a social sensorium, a social over-soul, an omniscient social individual.

A second view is that social consciousness is just the common objective content of consciousness of the various individuals in a social group. In a given situation a number of individuals may think about the same thing, may reach similar conclusions, and may experience similar feelings.

Again, the term "social consciousness" may be used to denote a oneness of interest or purpose. The conscious experience of two individuals may differ in certain ways, and this very difference may enable them to work together in such a way as to realize

[5] Unpublished lectures, autumn of 1902.

an end that exists for both alike. Diversity of objective content contributes to one purposed result.

A fourth view is that any consciousness is social in so far as it is socially conditioned. In so far as individual consciousness is determined by the fact that the individual is a social individual, it is social consciousness. Social consciousness is consciousness with reference to a social situation. In this sense all individual consciousness is social.

Nearly all writers of this school specifically reject the first conception — the social over-soul — and still they do not wholly escape from it. There is from their standpoint one thing strongly in its favor. It does secure unity. If we admit the existence of a conscious over-soul whose psychic processes include all social phenomena, we have society a psychic unity without any further argument. While nearly all sociologists disclaim this view, many of the psychological sociologists in their search for a unity are constantly forced back to it. In one sentence they will deny it, thereby losing unity for society; in the next they will assert unity for the social process by implying an over-soul.

Le Bon in describing the mental phenomena of people in a crowd, or mob, says:

> The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtless transitory, but presenting very clearly defined characteristics. . . . . It [the crowd] forms a single being and is subject to the law of the mental unity of crowds.[6]

Here we have the mental unity of a social group based upon the sentiments and ideas of all the persons taking one and the same direction, and the vanishing of individual conscious personality. If this is taken merely as a rough figurative way of describing what takes place in a mob, there can be no objection to it. As a scientific description of what really occurs it is faulty in several respects. That the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction is true only in part. Doubtless there is a general similarity of sentiments and ideas, but if it were possible to get an accurate description of

[6] *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, p. 26.

each man's mental processes, a certain dissimilarity would be found. No two would be entirely alike. No matter with what power the circumstances control the minds of the people, each man's character and previous experiences will in some way modify his sentiments and ideas, thus giving him an individuality of his own. Conscious personality does not vanish. If it did, there would be no "persons in the gathering," and consequently no sentiments and ideas to "take one and the same direction." Of course, this similarity of sentiments and ideas is an important feature of the situation. But just as long as we consider ideas and sentiments, we get not unity, but plurality. The very language of the statement — "all the persons," "same direction" — compels the reader to think plurality, not unity. This is not to deny unity to the crowd, but the unity is found entirely on the side of overt activity, not on the side of consciousness.

Similarly Professor Giddings's theory of social unity is based essentially upon the common content of consciousness and the common purpose of co-operating individuals. His position is best presented by means of a few quotations:

Believing that sociology is a psychological science, ... I have endeavored to direct attention chiefly to the psychic aspects of social phenomena.[7]

It [sociology] is a science that tries to conceive of society in its unity and attempts to explain it in terms of cosmic cause and law.[8]

The central doctrine of this book is that the consciousness of kind distinguishes social from non-social phenomena, and is the principal cause of social conduct.[9]

As long as everybody talks about "public opinion," the "popular conscience," the "sovereign will of the people," and so on, nobody need be deceived by such terms as "the social consciousness," "the social mind," "the social memory," and the "social will." No careful reader of these pages will suppose that I believe in a social Ego, a social sensorium, or a transcendental somewhat over and above individual minds. My view of the whole subject is made perfectly clear, I hope, when I say that by the social will I mean nothing more and nothing less than the concert of individual wills.[10]

All true social facts are psychical in their nature.[11]

It might be thought that sociology could meet this criticism [as to failure to demonstrate the underlying unity alleged] by surrendering all sub-

[7] *Principles of Sociology*, 3d ed., Preface, p. v.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[9] *Ibid.*, Preface, p. ix.
[10] *Ibid.*, Preface, p. xvi.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

jective explanations to other sciences, and by confining itself to an elaboration of the objective explanation. But this would be to abandon entirely the claim to the unity of social phenomena. The volitional process is obviously essential. If there is no unity here, there is none anywhere in society; apparent unity is a circumstance of the physical basis only.[12]

We must carefully avoid associating false conceptions with the terms social mind and social consciousness. They do not stand for mere abstractions. The social mind is a concrete thing. It is more than any individual mind and dominates every individual will. Yet it exists only in individual minds, and we have no knowledge of any consciousness but that of individuals. The social consciousness, then, is nothing more than the feeling or the thought that appears at the same moment in all individuals, or that is propagated from one to another through the assembly or the community.[13]

In a true social self-consciousness, which must be described rather than defined, the distinctive peculiarity is that each individual makes his neighbor's feeling or judgment an object of thought, at the same instant that he makes his own feeling or thought such an object; that he judges the two to be identical, and that he then acts with a full consciousness that his fellows have come to like conclusions, and will act in like ways.[14]

A fruitful source of error with Professor Giddings is his failure to distinguish between a thinking process and the objective content of that process. He assumes that a feeling or thought is a thing which may appear in many individual minds at once. Of course, many persons may think about the same object, may reach similar conclusions, and as a result of such thinking may act in similar ways; but this does not mean that the many thinking processes constitute a single process, nor the many volitional processes a single volitional process, even if the objective contents are precisely the same and the conclusions and overt activities entirely similar. If each of ten men sees a fire, and all think and feel that it ought to be extinguished, and all co-operate in extinguishing it, we do not have, from a psychological standpoint, one thought, one feeling, nor one volitional process. Each man's experience is a whole experience and not a mere part. The unity of the group is to be found entirely on the side of the objective situation and the overt activity. For the psychologist, as such, thought has no meaning other than a thinking process. The objective content of thought is not the subject-matter of psy-

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 13. [13] *Ibid.*, p. 134. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 137. [12] *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

chology, but it is the subject-matter, and all the subject-matter, of all the sciences treating of objective reality.

This does not in any sense deny the fact that for the explanation of social phenomena we must bring in the psychic individual. It only means that the social process in its unity is not psychic. The botanist explains the plant-process in part by means of certain chemical processes. But this does not make the plant a chemical unity. From the standpoint of the chemist, the plant-process is not *a* process, but a multitude of processes describable in terms of ions, atoms, and molecules. In a similar way the sociologist must explain the social process by means of psychic processes; and, similarly, unity is lost and plurality got by taking the point of view of the psychologist.

If, then, we attempt to describe the activity of several co-operating persons in terms of psychic processes, we have not unity, but plurality. If, on the other hand, we conceive of the activity of all as a single unified process — a social process — we must describe it in objective, not in psychological, terms. In a social group all the members may think and feel and act with reference to the same objective situation. To say that they participate in one thought — thinking process — would imply the existence of a "transcendental somewhat," which Professor Giddings repudiates.

Whether an activity is social or not does not depend upon its psychic character — whether it is imitative or not — nor upon similarity of the objective content of consciousness on the part of associated individuals, nor yet upon their purposive co-operation toward a single objective end. If the activity is socially conditioned, if it derives its meaning from the fact that the actor is a social being, if it does practically tend to maintain the situation — the social process — then it is social. It is impossible to divide up an individual's activity into social and non-social. All his activity is social. The activity of a savage who climbs a tree for fruit with which to satisfy his hunger is as truly social as that of the orator before his audience, or that of the chieftain leading his followers.

Professor George E. Vincent, in his *Social Mind and Educa-*

tion, takes a position in some respects similar to that of Professor Giddings. He finds social unity in the common content of consciousness and in co-operative activity. The following quotations are taken from the above-mentioned book:

> The sociological organism is in the final analysis a psychic organism.[15]
>
> A distinction must be made at the outset between individual and social consciousness. Each member of society may be conscious of his own thoughts and feelings, but it is only when these thoughts and feelings are common to a whole group that social consciousness appears.[16]
>
> Social consciousness is simply consciousness of the same thought or feeling on the part of communicating individuals.[17]
>
> Social self-consciousness implies a further element of purposive co-operation between such individuals toward a more or less definite end.[18]

Elsewhere Professor Vincent guards against a misinterpretation of his theory. He does not believe in a social over-soul. There is no consciousness but individual consciousness. The necessity for thus guarding himself arises from the fact that the statement that society is a psychic organism practically asserts what he denies. The expression "thoughts and feelings common to a whole group" involves the self-contradiction of the whole theory. "Common to" implies a plurality, but only one group is mentioned. The expression must mean common to the several persons of a group. But can one thinking process be a thing in which several persons participate? If so, this is a social and at the same time a psychic unity. Otherwise the unity lies entirely on the objective and overt side.

Dr. Charles A. Elwood's theory differs from those of Professors Giddings and Vincent in that he throws the emphasis over on the side of function. To Dr. Elwood the functional unity of the social process on the objective side is brought about through a unified psychic process. The following quotations are taken from his articles entitled "Prolegomena to Social Psychology," published in the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY:

> Now, the assumption that there are "mental phenomena dependent upon a community of individuals"[19] presupposes psychical processes which are more than *merely* individual, which are *inter*-individual.[20]

[15] *The Social Mind and Education,* p. 92.
[16] *Ibid.,* pp. 18, 19. [17] *Ibid.,* p. 69. [18] *Ibid.,* p. 69.
[19] Quoted from KÜLPE, *Outlines of Psychology.*
[20] AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, Vol. IV, p. 656.

Social psychology, then, if somewhat more strictly defined, has as its task to examine and explain the form or mechanism of these group psychical processes.[21]

Whatever psychical phenomena may be regarded as pertaining to group-life as such are, therefore, the proper subject-matter of social psychology.[22]

It is evident that the only social psychology which is possible is a psychology of the activities and development of the social group, a "functional psychology of the collective mind."[23]

Is there, then, a collective psychical life, in which the psychical life of the individual is but a constitutive element? . . . . The conclusion, therefore, is that there could be no such phenomena as public opinion, the *Zeitgeist,* tradition, social ideals, and the like, if the individuals of a social group were psychically autonomous and independent.[24]

But the real proof of the existence of socio-psychical processes is found in the fact that social groups act, that they are functional unities capable of making inner and outer adjustments.[25]

This principle of organization can be no other, on the psychological side, than a psychical process which extends throughout the group and unifies it.[26]

Human society may, therefore, with propriety be styled a psychical organism.[27]

The concept of the social mind, then, is not meaningless, although it does not mean that society presents a unified consciousness, much less that it is ruled over by a mysterious entity resembling the "soul" of theology and metaphysics.[28]

The theory of inter-individual psychic processes and group psychical processes has been sufficiently criticised. There are no "psychical phenomena pertaining to the group-life as such;" there is no collective mind. Public opinion, the *Zeitgeist,* tradition, social ideals, and the like are not psychic phenomena, if we consider them from the standpoint of their unity. Public opinion, if considered from the standpoint of psychology, is not one, but a thousand opinions. Its unity is purely objective, and, hence, not psychic. Külpe's statement that there are mental phenomena dependent upon a community of individuals need mean only that the individual's psychic processes are socially conditioned — that they are what they are because the individual is a social individual; that the individual thinks, feels, and acts with reference to the actual social situation; and social psychology, from this

[21] *Ibid.,* p. 657.
[22] *Ibid.,* p. 657.
[23] *Ibid.,* Vol. V, p. 100.
[24] *Ibid.,* pp. 102, 103.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 104.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 104.
[27] *Ibid.,* p. 109.
[28] *Ibid.,* p. 227.

point of view, would be a psychology of individual mental processes, so far as these are socially conditioned.

It is hard to see how *a* "psychical process" can "extend throughout the group" without the group presenting "unified consciousness," unless we assume that there are some psychic processes which are not processes of consciousness. In fact, this is Dr. Elwood's assumption. He forgets that the psychic process is the process from the standpoint of consciousness as such, and takes certain objective things and calls them psychic.

The merit of the work of the psychological sociologists is that, in spite of a false form of statement, it has actually assisted in calling attention to the importance of a correct analysis of the psychic individual as a means to the explanation of social phenomena. The older philosophers, political scientists, and economists based their theories upon certain unanalyzed psychological assumptions. They had simplified the character of the psychic individual in a way that seriously falsified it. Some simplification was inevitable. In order to get any statement of a scientific character, it was necessary to reduce the number of factors of so complex a situation by ignoring the less important. The criticism is not that they did ignore some factors, but that through a false analysis they were led to ignore certain factors that were essential to the solution of their problems. This, of course, led to false conclusions. Now, in spite of the fact that much of the psychology used by the psychological sociologists is inadequate, they have helped to create a demand for the use of a better psychology. In spite of the fact that they have confused the unity of the social process with the unity of the psychic process, they have emphasized the fact that the social process can be explained only through a better knowledge of the social individual.

It may be admissible, in conclusion, to venture a somewhat more formal definition of the social unity. A social group is a unity in that all the activities of its various members may be thought of as constituting a whole, and that this conception has scientific and practical value. A social group is an objective unity in that its end lies outside of itself, as a unity — in that society is not conscious. A society may be thought of as organic in that

the social process is circuitous, consisting of independent parts. It is organic in the same sense that a plant is organic—quasi-organic or objectively organic. A social group is composed of persons who are conscious individuals, and all real social ends are to be found in these individuals. The social unity, then, is an objectively organic unity whose constituent parts are psychic individuals.

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ERRATUM.

In the first line on this page (227) the word independent should read interdependent.